

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SP-02 L-01

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O 211150Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4518

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 4450

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA, US

SUBJ: MISSION'S VIEWS OF OUR POSITION IN LAOS

1. WASHINGTON, WE UNDERSTAND, FEELS IT DOES NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT ANALYTICAL DESCRIPTION OF SITUATION; WE FEEL WE DO NOT HAVE AFFIRMATIVE STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES BEYOND THAT OF TERMINATING USAID AND REDUCING AND CONSOLIDATING REMAINING MISSION. WE ARE ADDRESSING THIS LATTER QUESTION IN SEPTTEL; THIS MESSAGE ADDRESSES FORMER.

2. LAOS HAS GONE THROUGH THE INITIAL STAGE OF A COMMUNIST ASIAN REVOLUTION; IT IS POISED FOR THE NEXT STAGE. IN VIENTIANE'S 4270 WE HAVE REVIEWED THE PROCESS OF THE FIRST; THE ELIMINATION OF ALL ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF POWER -- THE RIGHT WING LEADERSHIP, THE ARMY, THE CIVIL SERVICE AND INDEED SOUVANNA HIMSELF; THE MILITARY SEIZURE OF URBAN CENTERS; THE BEGINNINGS OF INDOCTRINATION; AND THE ELIMINATION OF THE EXTENSIVE U.S. PRESENCE.

3. IN THE SAME MESSAGE, WE NOTED THE MEETING OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE WHICH HAS BEEN GOING ON IN SAM NEUA SINCE ABOUT JUNE 7 AND WHICH IN ALL PROBABILITY IS DECONFIDENTIAL

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CIDING ON THE FUTURE COURSES OF ACTION. SIGNIFICANTLY

THERE HAS BEEN IN THIS PERIOD A STRIKING LACK OF ANY GOVERNMENT DECISIONS. WE WOULD EXPECT THAT AT A MINIMUM, THE COMMITTEE WILL DECIDE ON ESTABLISHING ITS COMPLETE CONTROL OVER WHOLE COUNTRY, RESTRUCTURING ARMED FORCES AND PROCEEDING WITH SENDING UNDEREMPLOYED (AND PERHAPS INSUFFICIENTLY INDOCTRINATED OR "TAINTED") PEOPLE OUT OF THE CITIES AND BACK TO WORK THE LAND. WE BELIEVE THAT THE PL ARE FULLY PREPARED TO ACCEPT A SHARPLY REDUCED STANDARD OF LIVING FOR THE CITIES. THEY ARE SERIOUS IN THEIR OBJECTIVE OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY, WHICH MEANS, IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, CONSIDERABLE AUSTERITY. THEY RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR FOREIGN AID, BUT ONLY ON TERMS WHICH THEY CAN CONTROL. THIS IS WHY THEY LIKE COMMODITY ASSISTANCE AND FEOF (ALTHOUGH EVEN HERE THEY DO NOT LIKE THE DEGREE OF FOREIGN CONTROL AND RIGHT TO QUESTION IT ENTAILS). BUT GIVEN THEIR OUTLOOK OF PLACING PRIMARY IMPORTANCE ON ACHIEVING THEIR REVOLUTIONARY OBJECTIVES, FOREIGN AID CARRIES VERY LIMITED WEIGHT OR LEVERAGE.

4. WE BELIEVE THAT ONE OF THE MAIN QUESTIONS THEY ARE DEBATING IS THEIR FUTURE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. BASED ON VERY LIMITED INFORMATION, WE SPECULATE THAT THE DEBATE IS ESSENTIALLY BETWEEN TWO POSITIONS; MAINTAINING RELATIONS AND PRESSING FOR AID AS "OWED" TO LAOS TO "HEAL THE WOUNDS OF WAR," ON THE ONE HAND; AND ON THE OTHER HAND, SEVERING ALL RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., AND PERHAPS ALL OTHER NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES AS WELL. IT IS NOT YET POSSIBLE TO TELL HOW THE DEBATE WILL COME OUT; THERE ARE SIMPLY NO HARD INDICATIONS.

5. WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE US AND WHAT SHOULD BE OUR OBJECTIVES? THE BASIC OBSERVATION IS THAT WE HAVE NO INFLUENCE ON THE OUTCOME OF THE PARTY'S DECISIONS. THIS MEANS THAT WE HAVE TO PREPARE FOR THE WORST. BY THE TIME WE REACH 35-EMPLOYEE LEVEL ON JUNE 30 WE WILL ALREADY HAVE REDUCED THE MISSION DRASTICALLY AND CONSOLIDATED ALL PERSONNEL IN TWO MAIN RESIDENTIAL AREAS. WE ARE PREPARED TO ABANDON ALL USAID PROPERTY. HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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WE HAVE DONE THESE THINGS IN A WAY WHICH KEEPS THE FUTURE OPEN. IF THE BREAK COMES, IT SHOULD APPEAR TO COME FROM THE PL.

6. IN PROCEEDING AS WE HAVE, WE HAVE ASSUMED -- AND HAVE SEEN NOTHING FROM WASHINGTON TO INDICATE OTHERWISE -- THAT OUR OBJECTIVES ARE TO A) TO MAINTAIN A MISSION, HOWEVER REDUCED, SIMPLY TO HAVE A LISTENING POST IN INDOCHINA. IN THE MONTHS AHEAD

THERE WILL MANIFESTLY BE CONSIDERABLE INTERACTION AMONG THE THREE INDOCHINESE STATES. THERE WILL ALSO BE CONSIDERABLE JOCKEYING FOR POWER AMONG CHINESE, RUSSIANS AND VIETNAMESE. WITHOUT THIS POST, WE SHALL HAVE VERY LITTLE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE. AND WHAT HAPPENS HERE MAY WELL SPILL OVER INTO THAILAND WITH FURTHER CONSEQUENT EFFECTS.

B) A UNILATERAL U.S. DECISION TO CUT RELATIONS AND WITHDRAW COMPLETELY FROM LAOS, IT HAS APPEARED TO US (AND WASHINGTON HAS NEVER DENIED POINT), WOULD GIVE AN IMPRESSION THROUGHOUT ASIA OF A FURTHER AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL FROM THE AREA. IT HAS SEEMED TO US THAT THIS CARRIES RATHER IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS. MORE SERIOUSLY, HOWEVER, A U.S. WITHDRAWAL THAT APPEARED BASED ON SPITE FOR THE EXCESSES (SO FAR MILD BY MOST STANDARDS) OF A REVOLUTION WOULD NOT, WE BELIEVE, BE VIEWED WITH GREAT SYMPATHY. IT WOULD NOT ENHANCE THE REPUTATION OF OUR COUNTRY. FROM THE VERY BEGINNING OF THE CRISIS, THEREFORE, WE HAVE FELT THAT THE STYLE OF OUR DEPARTURE WAS IMPORTANT.

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4519

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 4450

LIMDIS

6. IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT WE HAVE SOUGHT TO PROCEED ON AS ORDERLY A BASIS AS POSSIBLE, AND TO PURSUE THE NEGOTIATING ROUTE TO THE POINT WHERE IT BECAME CLEAR TO

ALL IT WAS PGNU WHICH HAD FRUSTRATED THESE NEGOTIATIONS
AND NOT THE U.S. THIS IS THE REASON WE HAVE PROPOSED
TO HOLD OFF INTO NEXT WEEK BEFORE USAID ACTING DIRECTOR
LEAVES AND WE DELIVER NOTE OF ABANDONMENT. OTHERWISE,
PGNU WILL UNDOUBTEDLY MAKE POINT THAT AFTER MAY 27 AGREEMENT,
WE WAITED UNTIL JUNE 9 TO PRESENT NOTE 293 ON PROCEDURE WHICH
RAISED SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR THEM
AND THEN DID NOT EVEN GIVE THEM TIME TO PREPARE A
RESPONSE. WHILE WE HAVE NO ILLUSIONS REGARDING THE GOOD
FAITH OF THE PL, WE NEVERTHELESS SHOULD GIVE THEM NO
GROUNDS ON WHICH TO MAKE A CASE.

7. IT IS ALSO TO AVOID PROVIDING PL WITH ARGUMENTS
AGAINST US AND KEEPING DOOR OPEN FOR FURTHER RELATIONS

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GIVEN THE
CRUNCH OF TIME AND THE RIGID POSITION OF THE OTHER DONORS,
WE ARE CERTAIN THAT OUR REFUSAL TO SIGN WILL BRING ABOUT
EARLY END OF FUND AND MAKE U.S. CARRY THE CAN FOR THE
COLLAPSE OF THE CITIES' ECONOMIES. PER CONTRA, OUR
PROCEEDING WITH THESE TWO ACTIONS WILL GIVE SOME VALUE
TO AMERICAN RELATIONS, AND OBFUSCATE ISSUE OF FUTURE
AID. IF RIGHT NOW WE TOOK EXPLICIT POSITION THAT WE
HAD DECIDED TO TERMINATE ALL AID (ECONOMIC, MILITARY,
FOOD, RICE), COUNTRY TEAM CONSIDERS PROBABLE THAT PGNU
WOULD NOT WANT TO MAINTAIN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.
IN OUR VIEW, OBFUSCATION IN THE ORIENTAL MANNER IS
THE WAY TO MOVE AHEAD INTO THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

8. THIS IS HOW WE PERCEIVE THE SITUATION RIGHT NOW AND
HOW WE ARE PREPARED TO GO FORWARD OVER NEXT TWO TO
THREE WEEKS. DURING THAT PERIOD TWO MAIN FACTORS WILL
ALMOST CERTAINLY BECOME CLEAR, AND THEY COULD OF COURSE
DRASTICALLY ALTER THE SITUATION: PHOUMI AND OTHERS WILL
RETURN FROM SAMNEUA WITH DECISIONS TAKEN; AND HE AND
THE LPF WILL BEGIN TO REALIZE THAT MILITARY ASSISTANCE
IS OVER AND THAT ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IS ANYTHING BUT
GUARANTEED -- INDEED, CANNOT EVEN BE DISCUSSED BEFORE
AN ORDERLY DEPARTURE HERE AND A PERIOD OF MUTUAL RE-

ASSESSMENT TAKES PLACE. YET A THIRD FACTOR MAY ALSO
COME MORE FULLY INTO PLAY THAN IT HAS TO DATE: THE
ATTITUDE OF THIRD COUNTRIES. WE DOUBT THAT THE SOVIETS
AND CHINESE HAVE SAID THEIR PIECE -- INDEED, THEY ARE
NOW OPENLY ASKING ABOUT OUR INTENTIONS -- AND THE LAO MAY
REALIZE THAT IF THEY FORCE US OUT THEY WILL VERY LIKELY
LOSE ASSISTANCE ALSO FROM THE BRITISH AND THE JAPANESE,
POSSIBLY FROM THE AUSTRALIANS AND CONCEIVABLY FROM THE
FRENCH. THE EFFECTS COULD GO
EITHER WAY: THEY COULD
CAUSE A VIOLENT REACTION ON THE PART OF THE PL OR THEY
COULD HAVE A SOBERING INFLUENCE.

9. WHAT WE MOST NEED TO KNOW AT MOMENT IS WHETHER
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WASHINGTON'S PERCEPTIONS SQUARE WITH OUR OWN, AND WHETHER
WASHINGTON HAS IN MIND ANY DRAMATIC UNILATERAL ACTION
THAT WOULD TIP THE BALANCE. IF WASHINGTON DOES, WE
NEED TO BE TOLD AT ONCE. NEXT IN PRIORITY ARE PROMPT
AND AFFIRMATIVE ANSWERS ON CURSES OF ACTION WE PRO-
POSED SEVERAL DAYS AGO WITH RESPECT TO MAP RICE AND
FEOF. FINALLY, WE NEED CLEAR-CUT ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS
POSED BY THE USAID ACTING DIRECTOR.
CHAPMAN

NOTE BY OC/T: SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 4450; (#) OMISSION
PARA. 7. CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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